

VZCZCXRO1379
OO RUEHDE RUEHDIR
DE RUEHAD #1218/01 2961235
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 221235Z OCT 08
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1646
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 1700

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 001218

SIPDIS

FOR D (JOST), NEA/FO, NEA/ARP and SCA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/20/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [CVIS](#) [PK](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#) [AE](#)
SUBJECT: DEPUTY SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH UAE FOREIGN MINISTER:
MEDICAL VISAS, PAKISTAN

REF: ABU DHABI 1162

Classified by Ambassador Richard Olson, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: On the margins of the Forum for the Future ministerial in Abu Dhabi October 19, UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed (AbZ) recited to Deputy Secretary Negroponte UAE concerns about U.S. visas for medical cases, an irritant in the context of very favorable relations overall. On Pakistan, AbZ commented on Saudi perceptions of Zardari's Shi'a identity as a hindrance to the broad regional cooperation necessary to help Islamabad stabilize economically and politically. AbZ strongly endorsed the friends of Pakistan grouping, and emphasized the importance to the UAE of a multilateral mechanism by which to channel aid to Pakistan. Surprised that the USG had allocated significant new aid to the Palestinian Authority (PA) in spite of the financial crisis, AbZ hoped USG efforts to overcome that crisis would be good for Abu Dhabi's financial bottom line. Agreeing that Iraqi PM al-Maliki is in an increasingly strong position, the Deputy Secretary cited POTUS' remark that success in Iraq is our best policy to contain Iran. AbZ hoped for successful SOFA negotiations between the U.S. and Iraq. End summary.

Medical Visas an irritant in strong bilateral ties

12. (C) Emphasizing his pleasure that the U.S.-UAE relationship is something to be "really proud of," AbZ was optimistic our cooperation would continue. He was pleased at progress on the Congressional notification of THAAD missiles. Nonetheless, and while acknowledging the complexities of post 9/11 security in the U.S., AbZ said visas for UAE medical cases took much longer than required and urged the USG to assist with these "very urgent" cases.

Pakistan -- Saudi perception of a Shi'a threat?

13. (C) After securing agreement that AbZ would encourage Morocco to accept before the end of the Forum for the Future ministerial to host the Forum's next session, the Deputy Secretary noted that the USG was "reasonably impressed" with Zardari's leadership in Pakistan. It continued to be important to encourage the civilian and military leaderships of Pakistan to coordinate collegially. Pakistani relations with Saudi Arabia were strained by Pakistani suspicions of Saudi support for Nawaz Sharif (which the Saudi government denies) he added, lamenting Saudi absence from the friends of Pakistan meeting in New York. For his part, AbZ said he was delighted to participate in New York, said it was important for the Friends to work together to aid Pakistan, and emphasized the UAE's need for a multilateral mechanism through which it could provide aid. Such a mechanism adds transparency and demonstrates a broader international will to push the Pakistani government in the right direction. The mechanism need not channel all aid (to the exclusion of bilateral programs), but should encompass most assistance. The grouping helps participants overcome their respective reservations about Zardari, said AbZ.

14. (C) We cannot win in Afghanistan without a stable Pakistan, said

AbZ, which requires us to work closely with the Saudis (who have particular concerns about Zardari). When the Saudis view Shi'a influence in Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, and elsewhere, they see Pakistan as another of Tehran's neighbors "led by a person they [the Saudis] also see as Shi'a." AbZ said "I would be worried too" if Zardari were indeed a Shi'a partisan. While agreeing with the Deputy Secretary that Zedari seemed a secular leader, ABZ said Zardari's government needs to go out of its way to explain itself to the Saudis so they do not fear a Zardari-led Pakistan as part of a new Persian Empire featuring alliances between Tehran and "its Shi'a citizens in the region."

15. (C) Continuing his theme of a rising Iran, AbZ noted that Iran's rhetoric was even impressing Sunnis, including the Muslim Brotherhood. He had been amazed at the rhetoric of influential Sunni figures on the topic of expanding Persian influence. The outspoken Yousef al-Qaradawi, for example, uses al-Jazeera as a mouthpiece to spread his views (as one of the "original Muslim Brothers") against Israel (and often the U.S.). When al-Qaradawi stood against expanding Shi'a (and Persian) influence in Arabia, however, many Sunnis attacked his position. AbZ expressed concern that the heightened tension between Sunni and Shi'a would drive "our Shi'a citizens" into Iran's camp, causing Sunnis to further distrust Shi'a. He commended Secretary Rice for pulling Syria "slightly" away from Iran in her brief encounter with FM Muallim. (The Deputy Secretary noted that Syria had a problem with the Muslim Brotherhood in its own country and had cracked down somewhat on cross-border insurgents into Iraq.)

16. (C) Taking the issue back to Zardari, the Deputy Secretary noted that he is a secularist, and reinforced the importance of a broad assistance strategy endorsed by the friends of Pakistan. Islamabad

ABU DHABI 00001218 002 OF 002

must work harder as well; it often seeks a "pot of gold" from overseas when it needs to help itself develop economically, tighten its belt, and fight corruption.

Palestine and the financial crisis

17. (C) AbZ cited an urgent requirement to Aid Palestinians on the humanitarian front, although he agreed it was a challenge. The UAEG would help in any way possible to put the government of Abu Mazen and Fayad on better footing. He was surprised to hear that the USG had committed \$150 million in new aid to the PA in spite of the current financial crisis.

18. (C) Reflecting on the financial situation, AbZ said the UAEG understood the Secretary's reasons for not traveling to the Forum for the Future and said he had told her by phone that the UAE had more at stake in the financial crisis than in the Forum and appreciated USG efforts to bolster the financial system. The UAE has lost much money from its sovereign wealth funds and hopes USG efforts can "help us make some money back."

Iraq on a better course

19. (C) Discussing their recent visits to Baghdad, the Deputy Secretary and AbZ agreed that PM al-Maliki is in a stronger position than before, which the Deputy Secretary said helps Iraq be more independent of Iran. The Saudis should not fear a stronger GoI, he asserted; as POTUS said, success in Iraq is our best policy to contain Iran. AbZ cited a remark (which he credited to Saudi Crown Prince Sultan) about the possibility of a Saudi embassy in Baghdad if al-Maliki stays the course. That said, he hoped the PM would not become so strong that it would be difficult for others to deal with him. He agreed with the importance of successful SOFA negotiations between the U.S. and Iraq.

10. (SBU) U.S. Attendees:
-- The Deputy Secretary
-- Ambassador Richard Olson
-- NEA A/S David Welch
-- Aaron Jost, D Staff

-- Al Magleby, Note taker

UAE Participants:

-- Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed

-- MFA Director of American and European Affairs Ali al-Zarouni

11. (U) The Deputy Secretary's party cleared on this cable.

OLSON